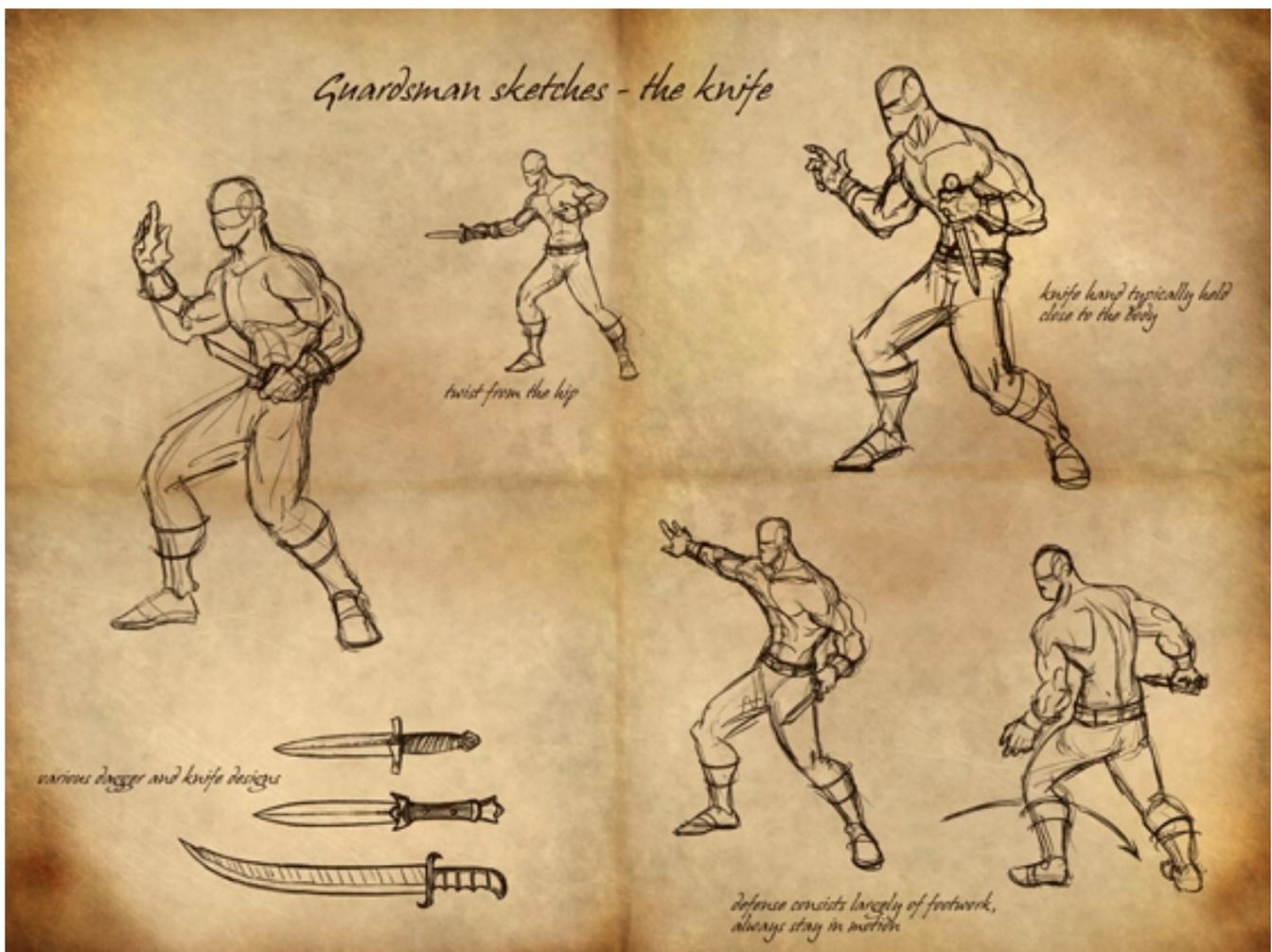


## Observations on Guardsmen

### The Knife

My Lord, this morning the Kaday and several of his tribesmen are taking part in the guardsmen practice session. Weapons primarily consist of the tribe's war knife and a variety of daggers and dirks wielded by the Imperial Guard. The tribesmen are not faring well against the guardsmen despite their war knives being larger than the average weapon wielded by the guardsmen. Of the party from the Sea of Grass, only the Kaday himself has fought the guardsmen to a single victory. Judging by his performance, I suspect the stories about the man are true: he was a fierce warrior in his youth. Even today, his ruthless determination and brutal speed are notable in these contests. Indeed, the guardsmen treat him with a deference not displayed towards the other greater nobles.





*Observations on Guardsmen*  
The Knife

One guardsman, called Geric, stands out from the others. This Geric is of a smaller stature than many of his comrades, and definitely one of the older members of the Imperial Guard I have seen. Yet, when the Kaday claimed a victory against a larger, younger guardsman, he was offered a contest with this Geric, as if it were a reward. During the encounter, Geric seldom actually used his knife. Instead, he spent much of the time grappling with the Kaday, pitching him across the sand, avoiding any serious mark from the war knife of the Kaday, and even disarming the greater noble at one point. The Kaday took the bout with much obvious pleasure, although I noticed that none of his accompanying tribesmen did more than show the smallest of grins.

I witnessed the guardsmen use several differing grips: hand wrapped around the hilt like a fist with the blade edge outward; a sword-like grip; and occasionally a reversed grip with the edge still faced outward when they have grappled with their opponent. The common stance consists of feet evenly spaced with the empty hand and matching foot forward. Unlike many of our fighters, the guardsmen typically keep their knife hand held back close to the body while the free hand is held out towards the opponent. Once an attack is made, the knife is again pulled back close to the guardsmen's body. They never leave their knife hand extended.

Defense consists largely of footwork. The guardsmen rarely stop moving while working with the knife, even the head is in motion. They meet incoming attacks with grappling moves, quick slashes of their knife towards the attacker's weapon hand to deflect the attack, or simply moving away from the attack. Their speed in this exercise is such that it becomes difficult to follow all the moves. What does stand out is the guardsmen seem serenely accepting that they will be cut by their opponent during a knife fight and focus their defense against serious injury, not small wounds.

Attacks are always fast and brutal. There is little dancing involved. A stark contrast to the knife fights seen upon our streets. Once any attack is made, no matter who originated the strike, the guardsmen seek to close and finish the engagement, typically with the knife attack coordinated with a grappling hold of some variety. Thrusts, slashes, jabs, cuts, whip-cuts and hammer blows with the pommel are used with equal frequency.

Again, I am struck by the sheer dedication of the guardsmen in any martial contest to inflict damage upon their opponent regardless of their own safety. They are always calm no matter the choice of weapon, number of opponents or difficulty of their goal in the exercise. I





*Observations on Guardsmen*  
The Knife

have come to believe that fearless aggression is a key element in all their training.

On a separate note, today I again heard several whispers regarding the absence of any Ravan noble upon the Imperial Isle. The issue is beginning to worry many here at Court.

*excerpt from the notebook of Shar Aronos, discovered in wreckage off the shores of Wardhill*



Illustration [Guardsmen Sketches: Knife](#) by Andy Underwood.

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